

MINUTES

MONTANA SENATE 57th LEGISLATURE - REGULAR SESSION COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, LIVESTOCK AND IRRIGATION

Call to Order: By **VICE CHAIRMAN PETE EKEGREN**, on January 15, 2001 at 3:00 P.M., in Room 422 Capitol.

ROLL CALL

Members Present:

Sen. Pete Ekegren, Vice Chairman (R)
Sen. Mike Halligan (D)
Sen. Greg Jergeson (D)
Sen. Walter McNutt (R)
Sen. Arnie Mohl (R)
Sen. Linda Nelson (D)
Sen. Gerald Pease (D)
Sen. Corey Stapleton (R)
Sen. Jon Tester (D)
Sen. Tom Zook (R)

Members Excused: Sen. Ric Holden, Chairman (R)

Members Absent: None.

Staff Present: Laramie Cumley, Committee Secretary
Doug Sternberg, Legislative Services

Please Note: These are summary minutes. Testimony and discussion are paraphrased and condensed.

Committee Business Summary:

Hearing(s) & Date(s) Posted: SB 143, 1/4/01
Executive Action: SB 9

HEARING ON SB 143

Sponsor: Sen. Pete Ekegren, SD 44, Choteau

Proponents:

Ralph Peck, Montana Department of Agriculture

Sharon Kindle, Montana Farmers Union
Pam Langley, Montana Agribusiness Association
Bob Stevens, Montana Grain Growers Association

Opponents: none

Opening Statement by Sponsor:

SEN. EKEGREN, SD 44, CHOTEAU, stated that the Montana Department of Agriculture is primarily funded by fees for service. The Pesticide and Agriculture Chemical Groundwater Programs are fee for service programs. Having operated for 10 years on the same fee levels and the increased cost of living makes this fee increase a necessity to maintain current programs and proper chemical registration.

Proponents' Testimony:

Ralph Peck, Montana Department of Agriculture, presented written testimony. **EXHIBIT**(ags11a01)

Sharon Kindle, Montana Farmers Union, Area 3 Director, presented written testimony. **EXHIBIT**(ags11a02)

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Pam Langley, Montana Agribusiness Association, testified that she represents the applicators, dealers and manufacturers of pesticides. This increase is becoming more necessary because of general funds being reduced in HB 2. Reducing staff is not an option and Mt. Agribusiness is working with the Dept. of Agriculture on reviewing these programs in the next two years.

Bob Stevens, Montana Grain Growers Association, stated that Mt. Grain Growers supports this bill and feels that it is very important to Agriculture.

Opponents' Testimony: none

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Questions from Committee Members and Responses:

SEN. JON TESTER, asked if Mr. Peck (Dept. of Ag) had talked to **GOVERNOR MARTZ** about these fee changes. **Mr. Peck** answered yes, this was discussed with **LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR OHS**. He asked two questions, "Is this absolutely necessary?" and "Is this just to maintain existing programs?" Both questions were answered yes.

This is to pick up general fund costs. **LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR OHS** supported this.

SEN. MIKE HALLIGAN questioned Mr. Peck concerning the authority of the Department of Agriculture to address fees on their own through rule making. Has this been discussed at all? **Mr. Peck**, stated that they have indeed discussed this and these programs have a "cap", they can only raise so far then they have to come back to the Legislature anyway to raise them again.

SEN. HALLIGAN stated that this needs to be discussed some other time without the pressure of the session.

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Closing by Sponsor:

SEN. EKEGREN closed on SB 143.

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EXECUTIVE ACTION ON SB 9

Motion/Vote: **SEN. MCNUTT** moved that **SB 9 BE TABLED**. Motion carried unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

Adjournment: 3:35 P.M.

SEN. PETE EKEGREN, Vice Chairman

LARAMIE CUMLEY, Secretary

PE/LC

EXHIBIT (ags11aad)